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*Seasonable Advice to Seditious
Malecontents.*

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S E R M O N

Preach'd at

St. *James's* CHURCH
in *Westminster*,

On *Sunday*, June 26, 1715.

Occasion'd by the Lord Bishop of
L O N D O N's Letter to his Clergy.

By *RICHARD SINGE* of the *Savoy*.

Publish'd at the earnest Request of the Gentle-
men of the Vestry.

L O N D O N,

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TO THE
CHURCH-WARDENS
AND THE

*Gentlemen of the Vestry of the
Parish of St. James's in West-
minster.*

Gentlemen,

ACCORDING to my Promise, which ye,
in a very obliging manner, extort-
ed from me, I now present to your
Eyes that same Sermon, which I commu-
nicated last *Sunday* to your Ears. Several
Considerations throng'd in to restrain me
from yielding to your repeated Desires; but
the uncommon Respect, which ye were
pleas'd to shew me, the handsomeness of
your Address, and the loyal Arguments
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DEDICATION.

with which ye back'd it, did prevail, and I chearfully give it up to your ingaging Importunities.

I have been entertain'd indeed with good Report on this Occasion from among you, who are well, nay zealously, affected to His Majesty King GEORGE, and who have a quick and grateful Sense of the numerous Blessings of our present happy Establishment; but I am aware that I must also pass thro' evil Report, and probably be scurvily treated by those that are disaffected; and therefore, as I have no other Return to make for your great Civility, so, I hope ye will look upon this my ready Compliance as a pretty strong Argument of that great Respect, with which, I do assure you, I am,

Gentlemen,

*The Savoy,
June 29, 1715.*

Your most humble and

most affectionate Servant,

Richard Synges

P S A L. XCV. 8.

*Harden not your heart as in the
provocation, and as in the day of
temptation in the wilderness.*

THE Psalmist, having, in the former Verses, called upon his People to praise the Lord their God for his excellent Greatness, and for his more special Goodness toward the House of *Israel*; and having invited them to join with him in adoring their infinite Benefactor with the humblest Homage, and the lowest stoop which either their Bodies or their Souls could make, doth here at the 8th Verse earnestly caution them against Contumacy and Ingratitude, Sins which that People, tho' most highly favoured of God, yet were strongly prone to; and he endeavours to deter them from such provoking Practices by the memorable Example of their Forefathers, who had been a faithless and stubborn Generation, and who had been most remarkably punished for their Obstinacy, and particularly for those two Instances thereof referr'd to in the Text; *Harden not your heart, saith he, as in the provocation; that is, as your Father hardened theirs*

in the Provocation, and in the day of temptation in the wilderness.

In discoursing on which Words, I shall,
1st, Briefly explain to you this Advice or Caution that is given under this Expression, *Harden not your heart.*

2dly, I shall lay open to you these Instances here mentioned of the *Israelites*, hardening their Hearts in the Day of Provocation, and the Day of Temptation.

3dly, I shall compare God's Goodness and Bounty to those *Israelites*, with the many great Things, which the same gracious God hath wrought for this our highly favoured Church and Nation ; and I will also compare their Conduct with ours : And,

4thly, I shall observe to you the sad Consequences which followed, and severely punished the Obstinacy and Ingratitude of *Israel*, and from thence infer what Vengeance is likely to overtake those seditious and hardened Malecontents which we have amongst us.

1st then, I am briefly to explain to you the Advice or Caution here given under this Expression, *Harden not your Heart.*

This is a figurative Expression borrowed from the Nature of several Things, which tho' soft at first may be made so hard that scarce any Impression can be made on them : Now as by *Heart* here we are to understand our rational Faculties, or our Conscience, which is our Spi-
 ritual

ritual Heart, by which we are able to consider and reflect on the obvious Dispensations of God's Providence, and the mighty Obligations which the Divine Goodness is continually laying on us submissively to serve and obey him:

So when we are either so careless as not to make such religious Reflections, or, if we do make them, are so obstinately wicked as not to be wrought on by such Considerations, then our Hearts are justly said to be hard.

And forasmuch as it is our own wilful Negligence or Obstinacy that occasions that stupid Insensibility in our Hearts, we our selves are said to harden them.

And that most properly; because the Means which God exhibits to us, if we duly use them, are abundantly sufficient to engage reasonable Creatures to their Duty, and to bring such as have fail'd of it to Repentance.

They then, who shutting their Eyes against the Light of Nature and Revelation, against the Reproof of God's Word, and the Convictions of their Consciences, against the Invitations of his Mercy, and the Terrors of his Justice, do presume to murmur at any of the Dispensations of the All-wise Ruler of the World; they who allow themselves in any known and habitual Breaches of the Divine Laws, have very hard Hearts; and for as much as the bringing their Hearts to this wretched Temper is their own Act and Deed, the Wickedness thereof will lye heavy at their own Door.

And this is what ye are so earnestly caution'd against by the Holy Ghost in the Text, as being a most deplorable, and almost a desperate Condition of Soul.

For what indeed can even infinite Goodness do for the Recovery of such Persons, upon whose Hearts neither the Declarations of his Love, nor the Denunciations of his Wrath, neither his Favour nor his Frowns, neither his Promises nor Threatnings can make any Impression?

What can be done for Men, who, as it is said of *Israel*, *Zech. 7. 11, 12. refuse to hearken, and pull away the Shoulder, and stop their Ears that they should not hear, and make their Hearts hard as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words of the Lord.*

Thus much may suffice to explain the Caution, *Harden not your heart.*

I proceed, 2^{dly}, To lay open to you those Instances of the *Israelites* hardening their Hearts in the Provocation, and in the Day of Temptation.

It is our great Fault, as well as our Unhappiness, that we are of so careless and stupid a Temper, that 'till God visits our selves we are not touch'd with a due Apprehension of his Justice, nor much affected with the most tragical Relations of his Judgments upon others. 'Tis customary now for Men to indulge themselves in Ease, and to sleep in the Lap of Sensuality, 'till God's Judgments, like the *Philistines* upon

upon *Sampson*, rush in upon them and destroy them.

When we are only forewarn'd of Publick Calamities, which God in his Word threatens to a Nation, sinful as we are, there are few that will believe the Report. When the Sword rangeth only in Foreign Countries, when the grim Face of Death, and the meagre Visage of Famine are not before our Eyes, we are not much mov'd, our Bowels do not to any good Purpose yearn, 'till these terrible Messengers of God's Wrath stalk about our own Streets, and knock at our own Doors.

Yet, methinks, if these flagrant Instances of *Israel's* ingrateful and stupid Obstinacy, and the fearful Judgments which God inflicted on that whole People for it were lively represented in proper Colours, it might very sensibly affect us, and forcibly dispose us to receive and comply with this important Exhortation in my Text.

Now we have a particular and amasing Account of both in the Book of *Exodus* ; in the 17th Chapter we have the Day of Provocation, and *Israel's* Behaviour in it described. The Scene was *Rephidim* ; *The People thirsted there for water, and murmured against Moses, and said, wherefore is it that thou hast brought us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst ?*

Now let us consider how strangely obstinate and ingrateful was this Contention of the Children of *Israel* against God, and then his
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chief Servant *Moses* ; against that God, who though he had his Dwelling so high, yet look'd down with the Bowels of a Father upon the Afflictions of that People, and sent *Moses* his Ambassador on Earth, and his Plagues his Ambassadors from Heaven, to bring them by a mighty Arm out of a slavish Captivity.

How provoking was this their Treatment of *Moses*, who had run through so many Difficulties for their Sake, and who in a triumphant Manner had brought them out of Bondage ! How harden'd must they be before they could use him thus contemptuously ! They that had seen the wonderful Effects of that commanding Rod which the Almighty had committed to his Hand ; that Rod, which, in their Cause, wounded the very Rivers of *Egypt*, and made them run with Blood, and turned the *Nile* into a Red-Sea ; that Rod, which rais'd the very Dust of the Earth in their Quarrel, and made it fight with and overcome their Enemies !

Could they question but that he, who had made the Sea dry Land for their Preservation, would also for their Necessities make the Wilderness a standing Pool ? How ingratelously stupid was it in them to imagine, that he who gave them Light in *Goshen*, when *Egypt* was muffled up in thick Darkness, and who had sent his flaming Pillar to guide and direct them, would now let them perish in the Desert ? Or that he who in so wonderful a manner had delivered them from the Tyranny of the *Egyptians*, would now let them dye for want of Water ?

Surely

Surely the happy Experience which they had of God's Goodness and Protection ought to have made them rely upon him in the greatest Difficulties, to wait upon his Providence with humble Patience, and to trust in him even unto Death.

But it seems they were a stiff-necked and untractable Generation, more heard-hearted than their old Task-Masters, more obstinate than *Pharaoh*, more obdurate than the Rock of *Horeb*. The Rock obeyed *Moses*, and when he smote, the Waters gushed out; *Pharaoh* too at last let *Israel* go.

Pharaoh before only drove *Moses* from his Presence, but this mad, unthankful People were ready to stone him. This was a bold Mutiny indeed against a Governour of Heaven's Appointment, who brought with him uncontestable Credentials; against a General, who by his Intercession did call down from Heaven abundant Provision for his clamorous Forces; a General, who triumphed over the King of *Egypt* in his own Court; and a General, whose Truncheon kept the Waves in awe more, much more than the Poets even feign'd of *Neptune's* Trident.

This was so very provoking that the Scene of it was called *Massah*, which signifies *Provocation*, and the Time was called the Day of Provocation from thence.

Moses himself was grieved at their amasing Insolence, to see a People, who, not long before had been Slaves in the Brick-kilns, Traders

ders of Mortar, and Bakers of Earth, to venture to quarrel with Heaven, and rise against God and his chief Minister, and to threaten Death to him, who was the Defender of their Lives, and Restorer of their Liberty. *And Moses cry'd unto the Lord, what shall I do with this People, they are even ready to stone me, Exod. 17. 4.*

What should he do? One would have thought he might have been provoked to call for Fire to consume such Rebels, rather than for Water to humour and sustain them. But *Moses* was the meekest Man upon the Earth, and God a most merciful Father, and he descended not in Judgment but Mercy; and he commanded *Moses* to strike the Rock, and he struck it, and the Waters flowed out and the People did drink.

Now sure we might hope that this Miracle in their Favour would soften their Hearts as it open'd the Rock, and that they should weep as well as the Stone; that Repentance and Obedience would have succeeded their Obstinacy, and that we should hear of no more Provocation.

But alas! we read quickly after, *Exod. 20.* of a Day of Temptation or Contention at *Zin*. This was such another Provocation, and upon a like Occasion as the former. I will not therefore tire your Patience by aggravating any farther the Wickedness of *Israel* in these two Instances of their Provocation and Temptation: I believe we are sensible that their Wickedness was great, and that we shall all readily

ly concur in very severe Censures of their Conduct.

But that, my Brethren, is not my main Design in this Discourse, that will do us but little good, unless we bring the Matter home to our selves, and apply those Censures which we are so ready to pass upon the *Israelites*, to our own Conduct and Behaviour.

3. Give me leave therefore in the Third place to shew you the way, and to lead your Thoughts from the Tabernacle of *Israel* to the Church of Christ, to that part of it in these Nations to which we belong, and to State the Case impartially between the Children of *Israel* and the People of this Land?

'Tis certain that the mighty Obligations which God had laid upon *Israel*, and the confirm'd Experience which they had of his abundant Goodness toward them, and his Almighty never-failing Protection, did highly aggravate their Sin, and made their Provocation inexcusably provoking.

Let us therefore compare the Favours which God vouchsafed to that People, with those Blessings and Privileges which the same gracious God hath from time to time been pouring upon this highly-favour'd Nation.

1st then, *Israel* was deliver'd indeed out of Bondage, but it was such as could afflict them no longer than the few evil Days they severally had to live in this World.

But the People of this Land have been deliver'd from a Spiritual Thralldom, which otherwise

therwise would have bound and enslav'd them for ever: *First*, From Pagan Superstition and Idolatry, by the preaching of Christ's Gospel; *Secondly*, From the abominable Corruptions and intolerable Tyranny of Popery, at the Reformation first, and once again at the happy Revolution; and if we may not in strict Propriety of Speech say we are a third time deliver'd, yet I will say we are secured against the return of Popery, by God's sending to us our Gracious Protestant King.

Now a slavish Subjection to the Popish Yoke is an Evil as much greater than the *Ægyptian* Bondage, as the Soul is nobler than the Body, or eternal Pains more intolerable than temporal, and therefore our Deliverance is to be higher priz'd than *Israel's*.

That People was also favour'd with very high Privileges, let us therefore compare Privileges with them.

First, *Moses* sent from God with great Power was their Leader; then we have Christ a greater than *Moses* to be our Captain, the Captain of our Salvation; they had only a Man to lead them on, but we have a God to go before us.

The Red Sea of *Arabia* was made to divide to give *Israel* an easie Passage, and to save them from their Enemies; we have a greater, a most inestimable Salvation wrought for us thro' the Red Sea of Christ's precious Blood.

They indeed were fed with Manna from Heaven, but that Manna wou'd putrifie; our
better

better Parts are fed, strengthen'd and refresh'd by the Body of Christ, the true living Bread which is incorruptible.

For *Israel* the Rock of *Horeb* was smitten, and the Waters flow'd out for their Thirst: For us a purer and more beneficial Fountain was open'd, a Fountain for our Sins, and for our Uncleanness, which hath infinitely greater Virtue than old *Jordan*, or all the Waters of *Canaan*.

They had a Pillar of Fire to guide their benighted Steps through the Wilderness; we have the Light, the Sunshine of the Gospel to be a light to our Feet, to give Understanding to our Heads, and to conduct us safely thro' this Vale of Tears to a State of eternal Rest and Joy.

They had the Promise of an earthly *Canaan*, but we of an heavenly *Jerusalem*; they had the Law of *Moses*, we have that, and the Gospel of Christ; they had Priests and *Levites*, we have Pastors and Ministers; they had Circumcision and the Paschal Lamb, as Pledges and Tokens of the Covenant between God and them; we have Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which to the Faithful are Seals of eternal Life.

They were incumber'd with an heavy load of Ceremonies, an intollerable Yoke as St. *Peter* calls them; but our Duty and Service is perfect Freedom, a light Burthen, and an easie Yoke.

As therefore we have been favour'd and blessed by Almighty God to a much higher degree

gree than the *Israelites* were, so let us inquire whether we have made to God a more grateful return.

Are we upon all Occasions and in the sharpest Tryals humble and patient, submissive and obedient to God's Holy Will and Providence? Or are we rather, like the *Israelites*, ready upon any Temptation to murmur and repine against his ever wise and just Dispensations?

Hath our blessed Saviour brought Life and Immortality to light thro' his Gospel, and hath he by his Holy Life and Doctrine, by his meritorious Death and Passion, and by his sending the Holy Spirit, deliver'd us from the Tyranny of Satan, furnish'd us thoroughly unto every good Work, and put it in our Power to be everlastingly Happy?

And are we unfeignedly thankful for this inestimable Love, and do we shew the Force and Power of that Gratitude in our Lives? Do we not only profess but *shew* that we thank, adore and love our Deliverer by keeping his Commandments?

Alas! we may without breach of Charity affirm that his Holy Commandments are notoriously disregarded; that many set themselves against him, and have arriv'd to the Chair of the Scorners; and that others are, as *St. Paul* words their Case, crucifying their Saviour again, and putting him afresh to open Shame by their monstrous Provocations.

Once more; Hath God in his great Favour to us, and by his gracious Providence deliver-

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ed us of this Land from the Tyranny and Oppression of the *Romish* Church, and her arbitrary Task-masters? Hath he preserv'd to us the Purity of his Holy Religion, together with our temporal Rights and Properties, and hath he confirm'd and establish'd these Blessings to us and our Posterity by placing and settling a Protestant Prince upon the Throne, who hath a numerous and hopeful Progeny to succeed him and perpetuate these Mercies to us?

And are we from our Hearts thankful for these Favours, and do we esteem them as such? Truly the Conduct of many wou'd perswade an impartial Observer that they think them no Blessings, nor at all thank God for them.

When our Properties were invaded, our Liberties abridg'd, and our Religion upon the very brink of Ruin; then we were almost unanimous in our Prayers and Endeavours too for their Preservation: But when our Deliverance was wrought for us and confirm'd to us, how soon did many seem sick of it! What an hellish Conspiracy was there form'd to assassine our glorious Deliverer! And how many even yet are so implacably angry with him for that Deliverance, and for confirming it to us by settling the Succession in the Protestant Line, that they are daily attempting to rob him of his dear-bought Lawrels even in the Grave!

Again, The settling of the Succession in his Majesty's Royal House hath been most justly esteem'd not only under God the greatest, but the only good Security that human Wisdom could

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find out for all that is dear and valuable to us; and this was justly apprehended to be in great Danger upon the Demise, at least, of her late Majesty; now God Almighty by his watchful Providence defeated all Designs that were hatching against it, and in his own good Time brought it to take good Effect, peaceably and without Opposition.

By this means we have all that is dear to *Englishmen* and *Britons*, secur'd to us and to our Posterity, there is no room for Fears of Tyranny in the State, or Popery in the Church; and if we and they that shall come after us be so wise as to know when we are well, there is a prospect of Peace and Prosperity to this happy Island to all future Generations.

Now how are we generally affected with these things? Do these Blessings, which Heaven hath heaped upon us, make us all devoutly thankful to God the beneficent Author of them? And do they work, as they shou'd do, upon our Hearts and make us strive who shall be foremost in affectionate Duty and steady Obedience to his Sacred Majesty King *George*, the first Fruits to us of the Protestant Line, and do they make us join our Forces to promote the Peace and Happiness, the Glory and Grandeur of his Reign?

This might reasonably be expected, and this is justly due: But alas! what means those Murmurs and Discontents, that daily and hourly grate honest and sober Ears? what mean those Riots and Tumults that are so frequent in
many

many Parts of this distemper'd Kingdom? As tho' they had been grievously enslav'd, and as tho' Oppression instead of Lenity had made them mad.

How many of our free-born Countrymen seem to look back with longing Eyes upon that State of Bondage from which they were rescued! crying out for the Leeks and Onions of *Agypt*, and seeming impatient 'till they be in the Brick-killns again.

A wise Stranger wou'd scarce think these things credible; but we, alas! have Demonstration of them.

And if so, there is something more aggravating in these Mens Conduct than hath been remark'd in the *Israelites* Provocation.

The *Israelites* murmur'd indeed, but then it was when they were pinch'd, when they and their Children and their Cattel had no Water, and were ready to perish with Thirst: But these murmur and industriously propagate their Discontents while they are full and at ease, not wandering in a Desert like the *Israelites*, but settled in a pleasant Land which is the Joy of the Earth, when they have all the good Things which a People highly favour'd of Heaven can expect, and when they have all possible Security of having these Blessings continu'd from Generation to Generation.

I shall prosecute this unthankful Task no farther, but proceed to shew you in the Fourth place, the Consequence of the *Israelites* provoking God in the manner they did, and what

is likely to follow the stubborn Ingratitude of our murmuring People.

As to the *Israelites*, God Almighty sware that *they should not enter into his Rest*, v. 11. The promised Land which with Eyes of earnest Expectation they eagerly look'd for, those pleasant Vales that were enamel'd with Flowers, and those delightful Hills that were crown'd with Vines and Olive Trees, they must never possess, that Land which flow'd with Milk and Honey, which had been promised for their Rest and Settlement, they must never come into.

Instead of fruitful *Canaan*, the barren Wilderness must be their Country all the Days of their Life ; instead of delicious Plains and Vallies, they are condemn'd to tread in thorny Paths, and to wear out their miserable Life in an inhospitable Desert.

This was a fore and national Infliction, no more than two of the Six hundred thousand Men that came out of *Egypt* liv'd to enter into *Canaan*.

To behold a whole Nation thus upon its Bed of Sickness, and to have a whole People condemned in gross ; to see, *Lord have Mercy upon us*, written on the Doors of a Kingdom, is sure the most astonishing Spectacle in the World. And as this was the Case of the Children of *Israel* upon their great Provocation, it may serve to give us awful Ideas of the Terrors of God's Wrath, and of what is likely to be
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the Portion of our grumbling and seditious Countrymen.

I have already observed to you the distinguishing Favours which we have received from our God, and which are still continued to us, above all that were ever vouchsafed to his once peculiar People *Israel*.

That we are a Vine of Christ's own planting, planted of the choicest Grape, hedged about by Divine Providence, water'd with the Dew of Heaven ; that we are now the *Israel* of God ; that we are delivered not only from our Enemies, but even from all our Fears and Apprehensions of their troubling and enslaving us any more ; and that God hath given us a delightful Prospect of settled Happiness both for us and our Posterity.

Then, surely, it would follow, that as our Obligations to the Divine Goodness become greater, our Gratitude should rise higher : And we are not to doubt, but that, as we have seen in this Example of the *Israelites*, as God hath lov'd us much, so that Love, if it be slighted and abused, will turn to Fury, highly aggravate our Guilt, and enlarge our Condemnation.

Rebellion is as the Sin of Witchcraft, and Stubborness is as Iniquity and Idolatry ; it being interpreted to be a flying in the Face of God himself, in the Person of his Vicegerent ; but when a Prince, beside his Supream Power, for which he is to be revered, is adorn'd throughout with the most amiable and engaging

ging Virtues, when he is a tender-hearted Father of his Country, and when he decrees Justice and governs righteously, as our most gracious Sovereign doth; then to disturb his Government by Riots and Tumults, by sowing Jealousies and Discontents, and by spreading about vile and accursed Slanders concerning his private Conduct, is such an Accumulation of first rate Crimes, as gives even Rebellion it self a blacker and more damnable Die.

And as such Persons as are guilty thereof are superlatively wicked, so it is threatned in the Scriptures, that *they shall not live out half their Days*; 'tis the ready way to dye before their Time; either the Hand of God, or the Sword of Justice will cut such Offenders off; so that they shall not live to see those *Halcyon Days*, that Peace and Happiness, and Stability of Times, which are the natural and necessary Fruits of our present happy Establishment.

Nay, and there is yet heavier Vengeance behind for such unnatural Criminals; as God sware to *Israel*, upon their Provocation, that they should not enter into his promised Rest, the Land of *Canaan*, so he hath declared tous, that the contentious and disobedient shall not enter into his Rest, the Rest promised in the Gospel, eternal, unspeakable and infinitely glorious; they will be, without timely Repentance and Amendment, for ever shut out from thence amongst Sorcerers, and Dogs, and Unbelievers.

A meer Heathen, who never knew the way of Truth, is much more excusable in his Commission

mission of the grossest Impieties than a Christian, who, being well instructed in the Knowledge of his Duty, dares yet play fast and loose both with his King and his God; dares make a light Thing of the Oath of God; swear Allegiance to his Prince, and then with the same Tongue, and almost with the same Breath, revile and speak Evil of the august Ruler of our People: A Man of *Sodom* shall meet a more favourable Doom in the Day of Judgment, than such Men as profess they know God, yet in their Works do deny him; who profess the Faith of Christ, yet hold that Faith in Faction, Rebellion and Unrighteousness.

I end all with *David's* Advice in the Text, seconded by good Council from his Royal Son, *Solomon*, *Harden not your Heart*; under all those enriching Favours which God hath vouchsafed to you as a People, study to be quiet, and mind your own Business; study also to be thankful for the Blessings ye enjoy, for the free Exercise of your Religion, for your Liberty and Freedom, for your Peace and Quiet, and for the undisturbed Possession of all your Rights, which are happily secured to you; and be persuaded, my Brethren, to fear God and the King, and meddle not, have nothing to do with such restless Spirits as are given to change.

Now to God the Father, &c. Amen.

F I N I S.

